

Devotional Studies

Until Christ is Formed in You

Paul's words to the Galatians, "until Christ is formed in you" (**Galatians 4:19**), should penetrate the hearts of men and women as they examine their own lives to see if Christ is really formed in them. Is Christ, in actuality, reproduced in your life? Since Jesus is the Savior of the world, it is imperative for each individual to allow Christ to envelop the whole of his or her life. An understanding of the Christ event should cause every believer to yearn for Christ to be formed in one's life. The coming of Jesus into this sphere of world history is of decisive significance for all eternity. This fact of the richness of God's grace should remold one's external performance, or conduct.

The contrast between the world of unbelievers and the world of believers is vast. For the unbeliever, the world is swallowed up in the "nothingness" of death—beyond which there is no issue leading from the events of time into eternity. In other words, there is no difference between the death of a dog and the death of a human being. On the other hand, for the believer, eternity flows from Jesus. As one contemplates eternity, one is conscious that what happens in Christ is that which streams from eternity past to the present and to the future. Even before God spoke this universe into existence, God had already decreed redemption for His creatures; even though, in actuality, they had not yet been fashioned. Jesus who belongs to eternity is the only One who leads to eternity. Since this is true, one should ask himself or herself, is Christ formed within my own life? Is Christ truly "formed" in your life? If one truly reflects upon what it means to allow Christ to be shaped in one's lifestyle, one's walk with God will be a life that honors God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

For one to allow Christ to be fashioned in himself or herself, one must come to grips with the unique, once-for-all character and mission of Jesus. Even though the Christ event occurred two thousand years ago, nevertheless, this event represents the eternal world of God. God disclosed Himself through Jesus Christ. With the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, one's eternal destiny is based upon one's acceptance of the Son of God. Undoubtedly, some within the churches in the province of Galatia had not allowed Christ to be produced within themselves. In fact, Paul writes, so it seems, with anguish: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,"²⁰ how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you" (**Galatians 4:19**)! The positive side to Christ's formation in the believer consists of the "fruit of the Spirit" listed in Chapter 6 of this book. Listen to Paul as he calls attention to the external behavior demanded of God: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control.

Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires” (5:22-24).

Christians grieve the Holy Spirit when they do not allow Christ to be formed in their “newness of life.” Again, Paul addresses this same topic to the Ephesians. Pay attention once more to Paul as he exclaims: “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:31-32). Paul desires that the inner life of every believer come to life in the Lord Jesus. In other words, Christ has been given to believers in order that a transformation may come about in their lives. This new life in Christ is not intended to be just internal, but rather it is to be external. Christ, in His Sermon on the Mount, addresses the “outer” manners:

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)

If individuals do not see Christ in individuals who profess faith in Christ, how can one expect to win others to Christ? Christ has been given not only to give eternal life, but also to bring about a renovation in one’s life. For one to believe in Him without anything new coming to birth in his or her life is not biblical faith. Biblical faith means to become a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). As long as one is worldly and self-willed, Christ cannot be formed within this saint. Every Christian is to be the “light of the world.” If Christians wish Christ to be shaped in them, then they must give access to the Spirit of God who reduces one’s ego and increases His fruit in the lives of His people. God’s people must honor God more than they honor themselves. Every believer must bend beneath the yoke of Christ’s humility. Do others see Christ in you? Remember, God invites humanity to share in His glorious kingdom through Jesus Christ. Paul’s admonition to the Ephesians is an appeal to external behavior: “Live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Ephesians 4:1). Is Christ formed in you?